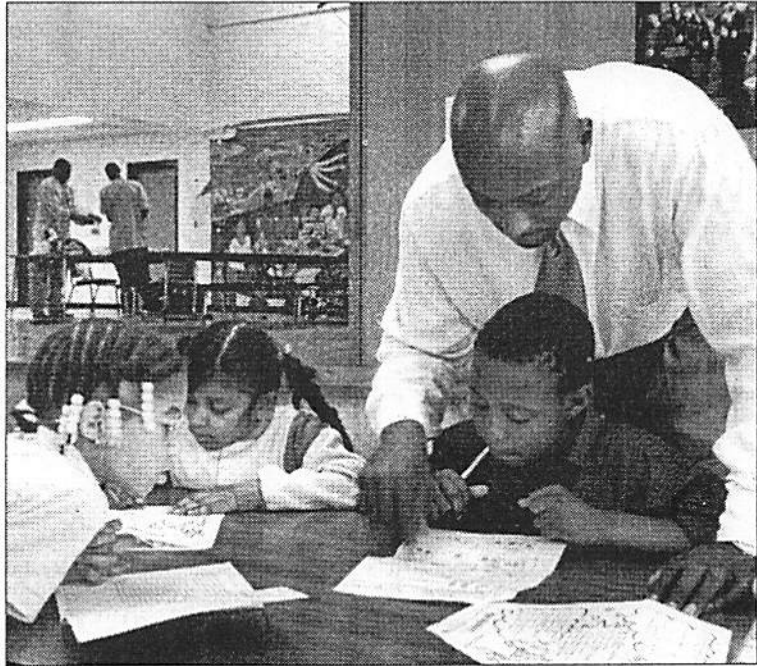


# Duxbury resident honored with 'Shine A Light' award from BET

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Duxbury resident Earl Phalen is speaking on his phone, while driving across the country to visit a site for one of the non-profits he runs. Phalen is a man on the go – as the CEO of two nonprofit organizations, he keeps himself extremely busy, working with children, providing them with educational enrichment opportunities so they can be better prepared for the future.

However, Phalen did take time out of his schedule on June 27 to accept a Shine A Light/Local Hero award from Black Entertainment Television during the channel's awards ceremony in Los Angeles, California.



Earl Phalen is the CEO of two non-profits that help children. He was recently honored with a "Shine A Light" award by BET. Courtesy photo

Phalen brought some excited family members with him to accept the awards. He says he doesn't put too much stock into awards and "all that red carpet stuff," but the Shine A Light award really meant something to him.

"I was so happy," he said. "I don't give that much credence to awards and recognition ... for some reason this one was really special. It's recognizing the work of two phenomenal organizations."

Phalen, 43, is the CEO of Reach Out and Read and Summer Advantage USA. Reach Out and Read is a large organization that works through pediatricians to help get kids prepared for school. The organization works with kids aged kindergarten through eighth grade to make sure they keep reading through the summer time, and don't fall behind their classmates in their reading level, Phalen said, adding that 35 percent of kids show up with reading skills below grade level.

"If we all do a piece ... we can help children arrive at school ready to learn," he said.

The program has been around 20 years and serves four million children all across the country. With thousands of centers, Phalen's job in this organization is more management.

"It's very much fundraising, building the brand," he said.

Summer Advantage is a more recent start-up and helps

about 3,100 children in Indiana. Because the program is in its infancy, Phalen's leadership takes a different shape.

"It's very much hands-on," he said.

Despite the differences between the two organizations, Phalen said he loves them both equally.

"The scholars will run up and give you a hug," he said. "You know a conversation you have with a six-year-old can change their beliefs."

Phalen's philanthropic nature is rooted in his childhood in Duxbury. Growing up, he spent time in Norwood and Duxbury, and in the foster care system before his Duxbury parents adopted him.

"My parents and family have always instilled a love for children," he said.

He said he was recently at a birthday party for his mother, where she was surrounded by eight children, as well as 31 nephews and nieces.

"That notion of big family, that you put children first. Doing for others, that was just the way we were raised," Phalen said. He also said his Catholic faith instilled a desire to do good for others.

When he was in high school, he learned of a scholarship to Yale that was specifically for Duxbury students. The scholarship allowed him to come out of grad school owing less money.

"That allowed me to pursue my passion which is community service," he said. "If I had not lived in Duxbury, I

would have had a huge debt."

Because he wasn't burdened by large student loans, Phalen eschewed working for a large law firm and delved into the nonprofit world.

"I've always had a real desire to give back," he said. "I found it in law school."